

# Furze Down School

Verney Road, Winslow, Buckinghamshire, MK18 3BL

**Inspection dates** 27–28 March 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- From their different starting points, pupils make outstanding progress. They acquire excellent reading, writing, communication and mathematics skills and are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning and love being in school. They readily take on demanding work and aspire to reach challenging personal targets.
- Teaching is outstanding as staff have consistently high expectations and skilfully enable pupils of all abilities to make rapid progress.
- Pupils receive high-quality feedback from staff so that they know how they are doing and how to improve.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students follow personal learning plans to develop both their personal and academic skills. They have consistently excellent attitudes to learning.
- The school provides an excellent range of learning activities for all age groups. The skills pupils acquire include a strong social awareness and respect for other points of view, including those from different times and cultures.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour makes a significant contribution to life in the school. They feel safe and happy.
- Staff create a very safe environment in which pupils thrive. Parents agree that their children are looked after well.
- Highly effective leadership has created a culture of high expectations and aspiration. Pupils, parents and staff are fully committed to the school and to upholding its values.
- Leaders, including the governing body, have ensured that the school has continued to improve since the last inspection, and that high-quality teaching and outstanding achievement have been sustained.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 14 lessons, covering all year groups. They visited some classes more than once. All classes were jointly observed with members of the school's leadership team.
- Inspectors met with two randomly selected groups of pupils, representatives from the governing body and members of staff with leadership and management responsibilities.
- The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority to discuss how the school has made use of external support.
- Inspectors analysed the school's performance data showing the attainment and progress of pupils. They also looked at attendance data, safeguarding arrangements and other key documents.
- A sample of pupils' work from across the school was analysed and comparisons made regarding the achievement of different groups of pupils. Inspectors also listened to pupils of different ages read.
- The lead inspector met with a foster parent to hear about her views of the school. Inspectors also took account of 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 34 questionnaires from school staff.

## Inspection team

Barnard Payne, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Fiona Robinson

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Furze Down School is a special school for pupils aged 4–19 with a wide range of special educational needs. At the time of the inspection, there was only one four-year-old in the school. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Pupils mostly have moderate learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorder. However, many have more complex additional needs, in particular, speech, language and communication needs. Furze Down is a specialist school for communication and interaction.
- Mobility in the school is much higher than the national average because a sizeable number of pupils join the school at different times, arriving from other schools.
- The proportion of pupils from ethnic groups other than White British is lower than the national average and most pupils speak English as a first language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through additional pupil premium funding is a little higher than the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and those with a parent in the armed services. In this school the pupils receiving additional funding are mostly those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school also receives the literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, which provides schools with additional funding for each Year 7 pupil who did not achieve at least Level 4 (the nationally expected level) in reading and/or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. In this school the funding applies to all Year 7 pupils.
- In common with all schools with primary-age pupils, the school also receives extra funding to improve physical education (PE) and sport.
- The school is being re-built with a planned completion date of October 2014. Most students in the sixth form were in off-site accommodation during the inspection because of the building work.
- The school does not use any alternative provision other than work-experience placements for sixth form students.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the range of communication and interaction resources in order to continue developing the school's specialism.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- Pupils' achievement throughout the school is outstanding, irrespective of individual special educational needs or disabilities. All groups make excellent progress, including those who join the school at different times of the year, those from different ethnic backgrounds, and the few who do not speak English as a first language.
- Pupils eligible for support through additional pupil premium funding make the same excellent rates of progress as other pupils. Their attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 and Year 11 is similar to their peers in that it varies widely. This is due to the wide variation in pupils' starting points. The progress of pupils eligible to receive free school meals is in line with that of their peers.
- The younger pupils make rapid progress in reading and writing, helped by thorough teaching of letters and sounds (phonics). This enables them to use a variety of resources effectively as they learn about new topics. When learning about fire and fire-fighters, pupils and staff used signing and information in books to answer questions and carry out research.
- By the end of the primary phase, pupils read and write for a variety of purposes, for example writing reviews of books they have read. Pupils throughout the school enjoy reading and regularly take books home. They learn to read with expression and fluency. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 were animated as they discussed books they had enjoyed, retelling the stories.
- Pupils make equally rapid and sustained progress in mathematics. Pupils successfully use their number skills in different contexts, for example to record results in a science investigation. In a design and technology lesson, pupils in Year 8 made excellent use of their mathematical knowledge to design and make a moving toy, using cams and levers.
- The school's use of additional funding for pupils in Year 7 has led to significant gains in reading, writing and mathematics through investment in a variety of resources. In a poetry lesson, Year 7 pupils showed high levels of enthusiasm as they analysed the performance of different, contrasting poets in video clips. The effective use of resources, and skilful guidance from the teacher, gave a real sparkle to the learning, leading to outstanding achievement by all abilities.
- By Year 9, the most able pupils use high-level vocabulary and ideas. When planning a piece of writing in response to the novel *Face* by Benjamin Zephaniah, they decided on the form they would use, taking into account the perspectives of different characters. They responded consistently well to the teacher's high expectations as they set themselves challenges.
- Pupils in Key Stage 4 cover units of work leading to external accreditation at the end of Year 11. Pupils take either entry-level qualifications or GCSEs. There is no early-entry policy for GCSE. Their achievement is excellent, including rapid progress in English and mathematics.
- In a Year 10 lesson, pupils showed a very secure grasp of the key themes in *Romeo and Juliet* as they considered who was to blame for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet and presented their own arguments. They had made rapid progress, overcoming any barriers to their learning, as a result of highly effective support and guidance.
- In Year 11, pupils work in collaboration with their teachers, families and other professionals to develop individual learning plans. They are well prepared for the sixth form and the school provides options and sets work at the right level for all abilities.
- In addition to producing work towards external accreditation, sixth form students have weekly work experience and acquire an excellent range of skills to ensure they are ready for life after school. They continue to develop their English and mathematics skills, but also build on their social skills, for example by preparing for interviews. The older sixth form students are clear about their destinations and excited at the prospect of work or college.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- The excellent quality of teaching across the school ensures outstanding achievement. Teachers

have consistently high expectations of pupils and use an effective range of support, resources and methods to keep pupils fully involved and systematically develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.

- The school's communication and interaction specialism is integrated into all activities. There is a sharp focus on developing reading, writing and mathematics, but equal emphasis is given to communication, speaking and listening. Depending on the pupils they are working with, staff use signing and symbols as well as written and spoken language. Pupils respond readily, are keen to answer questions and significantly gain in confidence in communicating and interacting as they move through the school.
- The school has accurately identified some deficits in the resources required to continue to develop its communication and interaction specialism to enable pupils and students to learn even more effectively.
- Pupils receive frequent guidance from staff, both verbally and written in their books. This ensures that pupils are clear about what they have achieved and what to aim for next. Teachers back this up with very clear guidance, setting out clear ways ahead for pupils. They respond consistently well; all have personal targets and use these as stepping stones to further success.
- Relationships in classrooms are excellent. Staff create a consistently positive atmosphere in which pupils feel happy, well supported and ready to take on new challenges. Staff plan very effectively to meet the wide range of needs and abilities, setting high levels of challenge for all groups, including the most able.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Their excellent behaviour and attitudes make a major contribution to the culture of the school. It is a very positive and friendly environment that is focused on enabling everyone to do well. Parents, pupils and staff all have very positive views of behaviour and safety.
- There is no discriminatory language, and relationships built on trust and respect are a key factor in creating such a successful climate for learning. Pupils are unfailingly courteous and are very proud of their school. They say there is no bullying and no name-calling and that everyone is kind to one another. Behaviour both in lessons and around the school is of an equally high standard.
- Staff manage behaviour consistently well. Because expectations are so clear, lessons move along well and there is barely any low-level disruption. There have been no exclusions for the past seven years.
- Pupils display very positive attitudes, setting themselves new challenges and readily tackling increasingly demanding work. They respond consistently well to the school's high expectations.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. There is a strong culture of safety, underpinned by effective systems and policies. Pupils feel safe and learn to manage risk, so that as they move through the school they are able to deal with new situations, such as work experience, with confidence. The school's thorough risk assessments include individualised risk assessments for the most vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils' attendance is higher than similar schools nationally and has improved over the years. The school does all it can to promote good attendance.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher and her senior team has led to the establishment of a culture of high expectations and aspirations in which equality of opportunity is at the core.
- Since the school was previously inspected it has significantly improved provision for the youngest children by increasing the range of resources and providing opportunities for outdoor learning.
- The school undertakes rigorous self-evaluation, using highly effective systems to collect and analyse data on pupils' performance and to keep teaching and learning under constant review.

The school is accurate in its appraisal of its own work and quickly tackles any weaker aspects in order to bring about improvements. This has led to the high levels of consistency in teaching and learning across the school.

- The performance of staff is managed extremely effectively and all are clear about the school's expectations and their own personal targets.
- Pupils, parents and staff fully share the ambitions of the school's leaders, managers and governors. The school's middle leaders are knowledgeable and influential and play a central role in leading and managing the school.
- The school provides an excellent curriculum for each age group, leading to external accreditation at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form. Reading, writing and mathematics are central to the school's work, but so, equally, are social development and giving pupils belief in their own abilities. A successful mini-enterprise scheme enables pupils to sell their high-quality wooden artefacts to the wider public. The school's communication and interaction specialism gives pupils the confidence to overcome barriers to learning and voice opinions.
- Senior staff monitor the spending and impact of additional funding provided through the pupil premium and report this regularly to the governing body. The funding is used for a wide range of purposes, depending on the needs of individual pupils, and includes supporting pupils' social development as well as their academic needs. This reflects the school's context and its communication and interaction specialism. Spending on improving reading, speech and language has led to excellent results.
- The school has made effective use of the additional funding for primary phase PE and sports. It has used this for lunchtime clubs, horse riding, swimming and external advice and support, all of which have had a positive impact on developing pupils' healthy lifestyles and their better physical well-being.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is woven into learning across all subjects. Pupils become socially aware, empathetic and reflective. The range of literature they study is excellent, exposing them to a wide variety of viewpoints and cultures. This plays a significant part in their preparedness for the next stage of their lives, whether it is in employment or further education.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for this outstanding school. However, the school made excellent use of the local authority-commissioned audit, undertaken last year as part of a county-wide review of special schools, in order to bring about further improvements.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is well informed and clear about its vision for the school. It has worked very successfully with the local authority on the re-building project. Governors make regular school visits, receive detailed reports on the impact of additional funding and maintain an accurate view of the quality of teaching. They keep staff performance under review and align this with pay; they know about procedures for addressing any underperformance. The governing body balances support with challenge and holds senior leaders to account for outcomes. Governors have ensured that financial resources are used efficiently to bring about excellent outcomes for pupils. They attend appropriate training and are suitably skilled and experienced to carry out their role effectively. Their training has covered pupil performance data, and they are appropriately well informed about data and its use.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110585
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	431396

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	107
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	23
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Pat Caulfield
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sue Collins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12–13 February 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01296 713385
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